



Gylden Magick

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March 2025

PRACTICAL MAGICK & UNIVERSAL ENERGY FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

Editor's notes

by Gylden Fellowship

Welcome to **GYLDEN MAGICK** – the spiritual magazine from [Gylden Fellowship](#) that spans both traditional and newer pagan beliefs and practice.

Dear readers of **GYLDEN MAGICK**,

It's March (the [Worm Moon](#)) – I've been reflecting on seeds and new projects. At Ostara (Alban Eilir), [20 March](#), day and night are equal across the world. As we look around, all of nature is growing after the winter sleep: buds are on the trees, seeds start to germinate and spring flowers appear. The power of the sun increases each day as the nights get shorter.

Ostara offers the opportunity for planning new projects. We can use the potential and fertility of Ostara

to create opportunities for positive change in our lives and in the world.

At the spring equinox, we are poised between opposite forces – light and dark, receptive and active, inner and outer. We should try to unite these opposites in each of us so that we are whole and balanced.

This edition has a definite emphasis on spring - the altar colours for this period are pale blue, pink and lavender. But no ads – after all, we're like a pagan public library and all the information is free.

We continue with our regular series of celestial forecasts, sacred lantern art from several countries, healing through nature, a maritime mystery, Alban Eilir, seagrass and Sussex wildlife. Our crystal text features the

Qatna royal tomb and our science writer, Mark, looks at the phenomenon of time sickness.

In past years, we would be frantic with preparations for the Wandering Witches' Fayre, but not so in 2025. We will go along to the event, to catch-up with friends. We look forward to visiting more old friends as the nights are lighter.

Thank you for all your feedback and many blessings.

Gylden Fellowship admins

For more info, why not join [Gylden River LRC](#) or [Gylden Fellowship](#) groups on Facebook today and see our archives or new briefings?

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Looking towards Ostara

By Nic the Witch

Alban Eilir (meaning *the light of the earth*) is known by several other names, such as Ostara, the Festival of the Trees, the Rite of Eostre, Eostar or Earrach, depending upon which path or culture you follow. No, that wasn't earache! Earrach is the Irish-Gaelic word for Spring; so, an t-earrach means the season of Spring. But most people refer to this festival as the spring equinox and, this year, it falls on **Thursday, 20 March**. It should be noted that the actual feast or celebration of the equinox lasts from 19-23 March each year.

At Ostara, day and night are equal across the world. As we look around, all of nature is growing after the winter sleep: buds are on the trees, seeds start to germinate and spring flowers appear, such as daffodils, grape hyacinths and bluebells. Both plants and animals can sense the return of life to the soil as the power of the sun increases each day and the nights get shorter.

Many pagan groups across the Gylden area have Ostara moots or ceremonies arranged – examples include Basingstoke Pagan Circle and Colours of the Oak Moot.

In Saxon times, the Earth goddess, Eostre, was honoured at this time for new life and growth. Apart from the end of Winter, Alban Eilir celebrates balance and fertility, both new life and rebirth, symbolised by the egg and by the hares that look for mates at this time of year. Yet we are aware that the first buds have appeared on the trees and spring bulbs are starting to grow.

Now is the time to express our own growth through art, craft, poetry and songs, remembering ancestral wisdom and preparing for future changes. This is also a time for healing, for reclaiming what has been lost and working with our intuition. Be open to inner wishes, beliefs and feelings and communicate with others. Follow what feels right to you.

Here are some ideas for celebrating Ostara, either at home or in a moot.

- Springtime wand-making.
- Going out for a group or moot walk to see the new spring energy.
- Planting out new herbs.
- Making a well dressing.
- Making a spring picture of natural materials.
- Baking bread or cakes for Ostara.
- Hard-boil some eggs and paint them in bright colours.
- Take the painted eggs and create an egg tree.
- Raise some money for a local rabbit rescue charity.

As we're just approaching Ostara (20 March 2025), perhaps it would be a nice idea to have some **altar incense**, regardless of whether it's just for you or for a small group ritual. You can make your own quite easily, using a blend of herbs, flowers, fruit, resins, etc. The first step is to gather your ingredients, together with jars, lids,

mortar, pestle, mixing and measuring spoons. Any guide to incense lists the parts and a part is simply 1 unit of measurement, namely a cup or 1tsp.

Start with the essential oils or resins, mashing them up with the mortar and pestle. Or, you could use a blender or coffee grinder. Then add fruit, flowers, dry herbs last. The Ostara incense could consist of:

- 1 teaspoon sandalwood to awaken your spirit
- 1-part vervain for cleansing your chakras
- 1/2 teaspoon rose petals for love
- 1/2 teaspoon orange peel for abundance
- 1/2 teaspoon marigold (calendula) for inner harmony
- 1/2 teaspoon milk thistle for protection.

Add all the ingredients into the mortar or a mixing bowl. As you add the herbs and flowers, consider their uses and focus on the blend of attributes. Blend and decant into the jars.

Ostara prayer

So, here we are, gathered in a moot,
Giving our praise – that is the truth.
Last week was Ostara and it's the day
To put the clocks forward – it'll soon be May.
But first it's the god and the goddess who reign –
As young lovers, handfast the twain.
Keridwen is here, Queen of the Spring,
Giving fertility to every living thing.
And Cernunnos too, with antlers and horn,
Showing his power with every new dawn.
Fertile gods, you bring the seeds,
Of light and life for all our needs.
Blessed be.



One might expect eggs or seeds for the celebration of Ostara, but traditional foods go a lot further than that, perhaps fish, cheese, biscuits and foods made of seeds. We've opted for a honey cakes recipe here. It makes small single cakes, but could be combined for one sponge – your call.

Ingredients for cake

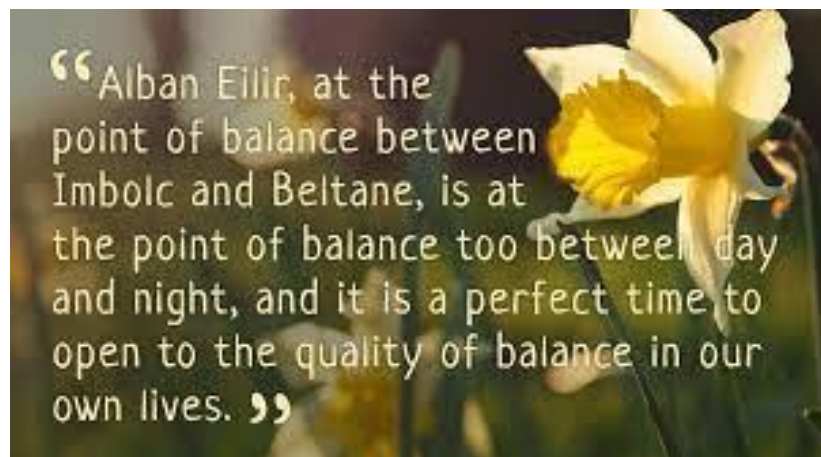
- 125g soft salted butter
- 75g light brown sugar
- 140g runny honey
- 2 beaten eggs
- 225g sifted self-raising flour
- 1tbsp lemon juice
- 1tsp ground ginger

Ingredients for glaze

- 100g soft salted butter
- 70g runny honey
- 125g sifted icing sugar

Method

1. Heat the oven to 180°C and grease the cake tin(s).
2. Blend the soft butter and sugar until light, add the honey and beat for 2-3 minutes.
3. Beat in the eggs; then fold in the flour, lemon juice and ginger.
4. Divide the mixture between the greased tins and bake until golden and risen (15-20 minutes) – allow to cool for about 15 minutes.
5. OK, time to make the glaze. Melt the butter in a pan and whisk in the icing sugar and the honey.
6. Spoon the warm glaze over the honey cakes, as thick as you wish.
7. Leave the cakes to set on a wire rack, glaze-side up and try not to eat them all at once.



(Picture from OBOD)

Gylden
Magick
March 2025

Sacred art: Lantern Festival: 12 February 2025

Collated by Gylden Fellowship - Chinese New Year, annual 15-day festival in China and Chinese communities around the world that begins with the new moon that occurs sometime between January 21 and February 20 according to Western calendars. Festivities last **until the following full moon**.







Customs: Wetting the block

By Erica Zann

Last month, I described the demised (out-of- date) custom of 40 Shilling Day. This time, it's the turn of Wetting the block, which was a curious lost trade custom from in Berkshire and Hampshire. As the two counties are adjoining, it is quite possible that it was established here, but a note by William Hone (the author of *Hone's Everyday Book* in 1878) suggests that in other places, wetting the block took place at Easter.

The custom originated in the the shoemaking trade and took place on the first Monday in March, as this was the time when shoemakers in the country stopped working by candle-light. It used to be customary for them to meet together in the evening for the purpose of wetting the block and the tradition was done by the master of the trade to recognise the workers. He either provided a supper for his men or made them a present of money or drink; the rest of the expense was defrayed by subscriptions among themselves, and sometimes by donations from customers.

The actual wetting of the block was the end of the ceremony, after supper. A block candlestick was placed in the midst of the workers, it was lit and all the glasses were filled. At the end, the oldest worker in the shop poured the contents of his glass over the candle to extinguish it; the rest then stood and drank the contents of theirs and gave three cheers. The meeting was usually went on quite late. The custom faded from use as shoemaking became industrialised.

From one demised tradition to a current one: the **Oranges and Lemons Service**. This is a London event, held at St Clement Danes Church in the Strand at 1pm on 3rd Thursday in March. For 2025, this is 20 March and all places need to be applied for in advance. The nursery rhyme, *Oranges and Lemons*, mentions several churches in the City of London and one of them, St Clement Danes, holds an annual service to commemorate it. In medieval times, the churchyard of St Clements reached the bank of the river and cargoes of fruit were liable to tolls when transported through it, hence the association in the rhyme. Since a special service held in 1919 to mark the re-hanging of the church bells, the church has hosted the Oranges and Lemons Service in which children from the local primary school each receive an orange and a lemon to take home. The service includes performances by each of the classes in school, namely dances, songs, poetry readings and more, following an opening ceremony featuring the school handbell ringers and a performance of the Oranges and Lemons nursery rhyme actions. At the end of the service (weather permitting), tables are set up outside the church door with the fruit upon them, and the clergy hand out fruit to the children as they leave.



Celestial forecasts

By Joanna Bristow-Watkins, Harmony Healing

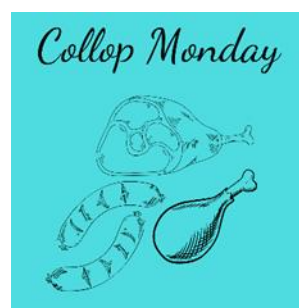
During March, we can look forward to extended daylight and the awakening of nature, especially in the forest. As well as new green buds and sprouts on the trees, we start to see new growth at ground level, with a plethora of camelias, hellaboies, daffodils, narcissi, hyacinths and daphne, some with a lovely subtle fragrance. And even where trees have fallen this last month, following three successive violent storms here in the UK, it will be amazing to observe the speed with which new saplings will appear to fill the spaces.

The Roman Calendar originally started in March and the month was named after **Mars**, the Roman God of War. To the Anglo-Saxons, March was called **Hrēðmonath**, named after a pagan fertility goddess called Hreða (also known as Rheda).

March begins with the Welsh celebration of St David's Day as well as the Roman Festival of Matronalia. March was a busy month in the Roman calendar; indeed, there's even a festival for Roman Matrons (older married women) to celebrate by turning the household hierarchy of their day on its head. March is also a month for celebrating women in the modern calendar, with International Women's Day (8th), Mothering Sunday (30th) and the celebration of numerous goddesses, Egyptian (5th & 20th) and Roman (1st, 15th, 17th & 19th). The Irish celebrate on 17th with St Patrick's Day.

This year we have Easter Friday 18 April - Monday 21 April (different for Orthodox Easter), so March features the lead up to Lent, including **Collop Monday** (3rd), **Shrove Tuesday** (4th), **Ash Wednesday** (5th), **Fritter Thursday** (6th) and **Kissing Friday** (7th). We have our Nature Connection/Forest Bathing event scheduled this month on **Saturday 22nd** at the Harry Edwards Foundation (Shere, Surrey).

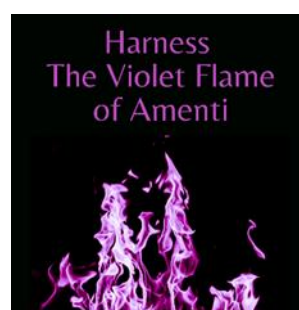
Full Moon is Friday 14 March, peaking at 06:54. Our online **Full Moon Guided Meditation** will be on Thursday 13 March.



Saturday 1 March is St David's Day. St. David, Dewi Sant, is the patron saint of the Welsh, and 1 March, his feast day, is celebrated as a patriotic and cultural festival in Wales. Saint David, grandson of the King of Ceredigion, was said to have been born on a clifftop during a fierce storm. He died on this day during the year 500CE. He grew up to be a celebrated Bishop and founder of monastic settlements and churches. Glastonbury Abbey may have been founded by St David. So why is David associated with a dragon? There is a myth that when David was asked by villagers to slay a dragon, he instead went to visit the dragon and listen to its sad tale.

Saturday 1 March is also Matronalia, according to Roman tradition, which was the topsy-turvy feast sacred to Juno, the birth Goddess. It was also a celebration of marriage and the peace that these unions could usher in between Romans and Sabini, tribes from the mountain region near the Tibor. The Roman mistress of the house waited on her servants for the day and presents were given to other people's partners! The wives of the house also gave a feast for their female slaves.

Monday 3 March, this year is Collop Monday, also known as Shrove Monday. It's the day before Shrove Tuesday and isn't widely observed, but it is a similar frugal tradition to the consumption of eggs in the form of pancakes to use them up before the start of the fasting period of Lent. As described in an extract from the *Nottingham Evening Post 1931*, collops are chunks of cured meat (such as bacon) or leftover roasted meat, so this involves using up any remaining meat in the household before Lent. In Cornwall, it's known as Peasen Monday, because pea soup was the traditional dish of the day.



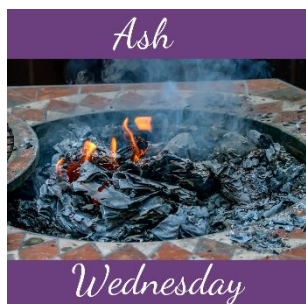
Tuesday 4 March, this year, is Mardi Gras, also known as Shrove Tuesday or, within the UK, as Pancake Day. Being the final day before Lent, this was traditionally a day for confessing sins and using up all the foods banned during the Lent fast. With pancakes containing butter and milk, they became associated with the date. The verb, to **shrive**, means to gain absolution for one's sins through confession and/or penance. Hence Shrove Tuesday is derived from the tradition that Christians were shriven before Lent.

The date of Lent, which takes place in either February or March, but always seven weeks before Easter varies from year to year according to the lunar calendar which determines the date on which Easter falls. Interestingly, as with many Christian Festivals, there is a theory that Pancake Day might actually have originated as a pagan holiday; when eating warm, circular yellow pancakes, resembling the sun, celebrated the arrival of spring.

Tuesdays 4, 11 & 18 March are the online Harmony Healing Workshops: Violet Flame of Amenti (Level 1) 7.15pm - 9.30pm (UK time/GMT = UK & America friendly hours), £88 or £111 to include optional attunements. They comprise three x 2.25 hour evening courses, held remotely on Zoom. Recordings are kept of the missed sessions, so late registrations are possible. Course content features instructions on the ancient alchemical properties of the Violet Flame and how to use it in your daily life. See [Violet Flame of Amenti](#) for further details and to book. Worth 1 unit towards the [RSE Level 1](#), available at a special package rate of £266, which includes four personal attunements.

Wednesday 5 March is Ploiaphesia, the Egyptian Festival of Navigation. This was when one of the most important festivals of the Egyptian Goddess Isis was celebrated, the Ploiaphesia or Navigium Isidis (Ship of Isis). The festival marked the opening of the safe sailing season after the stormy weather of winter had passed.

A statue of Isis was carried in procession from her temple down to the harbour, where a specially-built ship was moored. The ship would then be loaded with offerings and dedicated to the Goddess, before being launched and carried out to sea by the wind. The festival is described by Apuleius in his *Metamorphoses* (also known as the *Golden Ass*). To participate you can enjoy the energy of water and celebrate with processions, lights, mirrors, music and flowers.



Wednesday 5 March, is also Ash Wednesday this year, which is generally said to have been named after the tradition of burning away old issues in preparation for Lent. The date of Lent - which takes place in either February or March, but always seven weeks before Easter - varies from year to year according to the lunar calendar which determines when Easter falls. However, Ash Wednesday could have obtained its name from an apparent tradition of placing a stick of Ash down one's sock for good luck! Ouch, I can't see that being popular, but then maybe the choice of stick, regarding size and shape, is paramount!

Thursday 6 March is Fritter Thursday. According to [The Free Dictionary](#), Fritter Thursday took its name from the custom of eating apple fritters, which were fruit-filled cakes deep-fried in fat, on this day. I was surprised that this would be an acceptable dish once Lent had commenced (as fritter suggests batter which would contain egg and milk) and, on further research, I discovered that in [Lancashire](#) (source: [lep.co.uk](#)) traditionally Shrovetide meant the three days before Lent and comprised of Collop Monday, Pancake Tuesday and Fritters Wednesday (rather than Thursday) with the fritters being sliced apples fried in batter.

Friday 7 March is Kissing Friday. According to [historic.co.uk](#), this bizarre custom was especially popular in the Victorian and Edwardian period and only died out in the mid-20th century. Although unthinkable these days, a schoolboy could kiss a girl on this day without fear of repercussions. Of course, first of all the girl had to be caught and, in some instances, this involved tying ropes across the street and passing girls would have to pay a kiss for safe passage across the rope.

Others would simply chase the girls until they caught them. Indeed, Kissing Friday was also the one day every year when girls could leave school early, to avoid being chased home by the boys. In the Leicestershire village of Sileby, this day was called Nippy Hug Day. Here, if the girl actively resisted a kiss, the boy could louse (pinch) her bottom, a disturbing reference to the action of pinching off lice.

Saturday 8 March is International Women's Day: a day designated to celebrate the empowerment of women worldwide. The theme for 2025 is: **For ALL women and girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment.** This year's theme calls for action that can unlock equal rights, power and opportunities for all and a feminist future where no one is left behind. See the [International Women's Day website](#) or see [womenforwomen.org](#).



Thursday 13 March, 7.30-9.30pm UK time (GMT) is our **Full Moon Unity Consciousness Meditation**. During this session, we connect with other like-minded people and together we work through a mindful chakra balancing process using colours and etheric crystals, with the aim that all participants will experience a degree of unity consciousness.

Participants all receive a deeply healing experience. Cost to participate is £20 by online BACS payment (£1 admin fee added for PayPal, concessions to RSE/VFoA graduates), book at the **Harmony Shop**. This activity serves as a good taster of Joanna's work in general and the virtual format of our Zoom based programme. And, most importantly, it's a step towards making a difference to the global predicament.

Friday 14 March @ 06:54 is the Ash Worm Micro Full Moon and Total Lunar Eclipse. The Full Moon meditation will be held the night before. Regions seeing some or all of the eclipse: UK & Europe, most of Asia, most of Australia, most of Africa, North & South America, Pacific, Antarctica, Atlantic, Arctic. For full details of the eclipse, see **timeanddate.com**. Between Full Moon and the next New Moon is considered as a good time energetically for detoxing the body. For details of Full Moon timings for the year, as well as instructions for an Angela McGerr Angelic Meditation with Gabriel, see **Harmony Healing Full Moon** link.

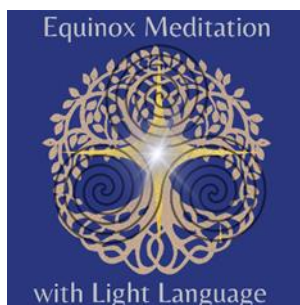
Saturday 15 March was the Ides of March in Roman tradition and the Festival of Jupiter. Shakespeare had a soothsayer warn Julius Caesar to beware the Ides of March. Indeed, he was reputedly assassinated on 15 March 44 BCE. In Ancient Rome, 15 March was also the celebration of Anna Perenna - offerings were made to the Spirit of the Year, so that the circle could be completed.



Monday 17 March is St Patrick's Day in Ireland. St Patrick is credited with converting the Irish back to Christianity which had been abandoned under Roman rule. Saint Patrick is said to have used the Shamrock (three leaved clover) as a metaphor for the Christian Trinity. The name, *shamrock*, comes from the Irish word, *seamróg*, which is derived from the Irish word for clover (*seamair*) and means *little clover* or *young clover*.

Monday 17 March was also the Roman Festival of Liberalia. This was the feast to celebrate the male coming of age! In view of the date coinciding with St Patrick's Day, having abandoned Christianity under Roman rule, I wonder if there is a connection that when Eire re-converted to Christianity, they chose the Roman Festival for males coming of age as their date of celebration. Considering the theme of rebirthing and the Spring Equinox, I can't help wondering if it was a development from the Egyptian Pelusia Festival (see 20 March entry).

Wednesday 19 March is the Roman Festival of Quinquatrus, so named because it was the fifth day after the Ides of March. This was a Festival in honour of Minerva; it seems that women were accustomed to consult fortune-tellers and diviners upon this day. At one time, celebrations took place on 19-23 March, originally an Etruscan festival to celebrate spring, rites of women, rebirthing and the Spring Equinox. I can't help wondering if it was a development from the Egyptian Pelusia Festival (see below).



Wednesday 19 March is the night before the Equinox peaks at 09.01 on Thursday and I am offering a Spring Equinox Meditation. This session will also be themed on the Ancient Egyptian Festival of Pelusia, **which coincides with the Spring Equinox**, as well as the harmony & balance attained when night and day are of equal length as they are on the equinoxes. This involves a guided meditation back to Ancient Egypt, an interpretation of how the festival was celebrated and a general balancing of internal energies plus a ritual to regain our inherent strengths from previous lives. The experience included a series of Light Language encodements.

Thursday 20 March is the Spring Equinox at 09:01. On the Equinox, light and dark are equal over the whole world: mark the moment of the Equinox with silence and stillness. Representing balance of opposites; it's a good time to bring balance into your life. I'll be offering a special Equilibrium Attunement (£55, half price to RSE & Moon students) to help you balance your energies on the Equinox, the day when night and day is equal and the earth herself is in perfect balance.



Thursday 20 March is also the Egyptian Festival of Pelusia, with the Egyptian goddess, Isis, working her spring magic to ensure the flooding of the Nile later in the year, thereby guaranteeing a fruitful harvest. There is always an Egyptian Festival coinciding with the Celtic Celebrations.

Friday 21 March is the International Day of Forests, sponsored by the United Nations. The theme for 2025 is Forests and Foods, celebrating the crucial roles of forests in food security, nutrition and livelihoods. Forests are home to over 60,000 tree species; comprising about 80% of the world's terrestrial biodiversity. In fact, 1.6 billion people are directly dependent on forests for their shelter, food, medicines, income and energy. Alarming, we are losing around 10 million hectares of global forest annually (the size of Iceland) and this is said to account for 12-20% of greenhouse gas emissions thought to contribute to our climate change. As a qualified Forest Bathing guide, I am delighted to see forests being recognised for their well-being benefits and valuable biodiversity and efforts being made to protect dwindling international woodlands.

Saturday 22 March, 11am - 2pm, Forest Bathing in the grounds of Harry Edward's Foundation, £39.77. Usually at this time of the year, the site is carpeted with daffodils. Immerse yourself in the healing elements of nature and connect deeply with all your senses. Spend three hours in the woods mindfully connecting to your surroundings and living fully in the present moment, guided by me in simple sensory exercises and a treelaxation. It is a deeply relaxing and rejuvenating experience, which, despite the title forest bathing, does not involve any swimming!

Some of the scientifically proven benefits of spending time in woodland include reduced stress levels, stronger immune system response, and a stabilised cortisol cycle. This session which will take place in all weathers except very strong winds or electrical storms. Book via the [Harmony Healing shop](https://www.harmonyhealing.co.uk). Email katieandjo@harmonyinnature.uk to go on our forest bathing mailing list.



Saturday 29 March @ 10:57 is the Alder Equinox New Supermoon and Partial Solar Eclipse.

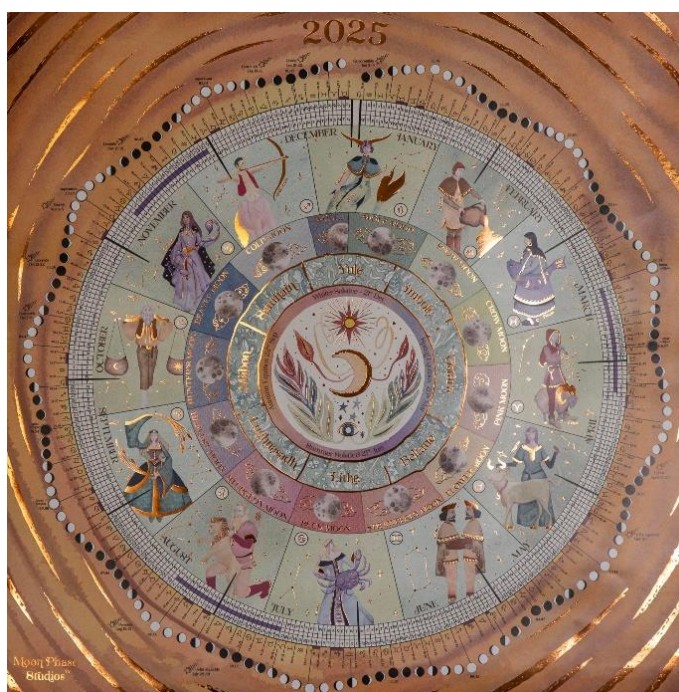
The **New Moon Abundance Ritual** should be carried out within 24 hours after the New Moon. It needs to be after the New Moon because the moon should be waxing (getting bigger again) to carry the manifestation energy. There are video instructions on my [Facebook Page](#) or [You Tube Page](#). It is a good day for creating a personal or corporate Vision Board for 2025. Harmony Healing provides a **Vision Board template** and, periodically, we offer a lunar cycle mentoring programme.

Saturday 29 March in the UK this year is when the clocks go forward. In fact, at 01.00 on **Sunday 30 March is the start of British Summer Time**, although we often have a while to wait until summer arrives in the UK!

Sunday 30 March is Mothering Sunday in the UK, always three weeks before Easter, now viewed as a chance to recognise the positive role of mothers in our lives. Often, posies of daffodils are presented. Mothering Sunday is celebrated by Christians in the UK and Ireland and some other English-speaking countries. It takes place on the fourth Sunday in Lent, which is exactly three weeks before Easter Day.

It was once observed as a day when people visited their mother church, but has become a day for honouring mothers and exchanging presents with them. Increasingly, it's being referred to as Mother's Day, although that name originated as an American secular holiday, celebrated on a different date and quite distinct from the initial UK-based Mothering Sunday.

Acknowledgments



Celestial Forecasts are compiled by Joanna Bristow-Watkins of Harmony Healing, the original is published at Joanna's [Monthly Celestial Forecasts](#). It is created using many sources, but notably the [Moonwise Calendar](#) and Lia Leendertz's annual Almanac. Whilst considerable effort is made to ensure accuracy, this is not an exact science and sources are sometimes contradictory!

Through Harmony Healing, Joanna utilises the philosophies of the Ancient Egyptians, in the form of [Reyad Sekh Em® \(RSE\) Level 1](#) Egyptian Alchemy Healing. Featuring four online modules of [Khemitology](#) (Ancient Egyptology according to the indigenous oral traditions), [Violet Flame of Amenti](#) - commencing 4 March, [Mindful Chakra Balancing](#) & [Essene Angelology](#). Missed sessions are fully recorded so that late registrations are possible and study can commence at any time. [Reyad Sekh Em \(RSE\) Level 1](#) costs £266 and run about three times a year. The individual modules are stand-alone and cost either £88 or £66, hence the RSE 1 package offers a cost saving.

Crystals: Qatna Royal Tomb

By Judit Zöldföldi

(Editor's note: lapis lazuli was found in the Qatna royal tomb in Syria, along with amber, gold and other artefacts. The tomb was discovered in 2002 beneath the Bronze Age palace at Qatna.)

This preliminary descriptive report details the analysis of quartz varieties and lapis lazuli found in the royal tomb of Qatna. The study focuses on various gemstone materials excavated, highlighting the predominance of quartz, including its macrocrystalline and microcrystalline forms, alongside an examination of lapis lazuli and its imitations. The findings contribute to understanding the material culture and gemstone usage in antiquity.



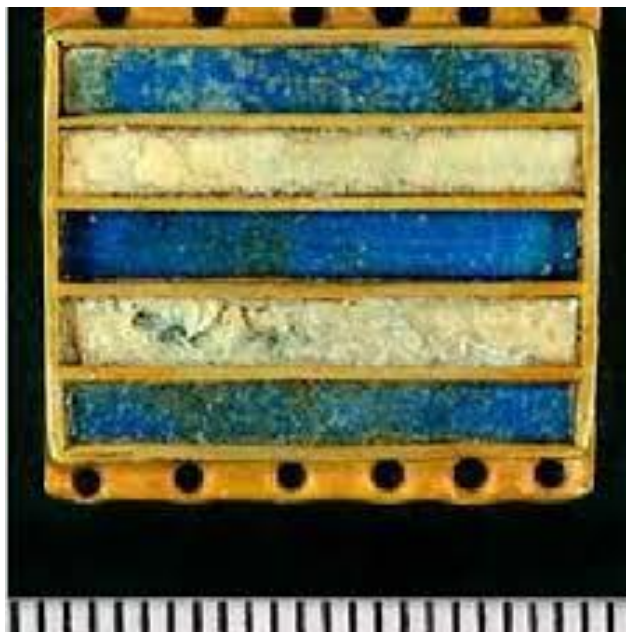
Because of the very high value of lapis lazuli, attempts to produce lapis lazuli artificially were made as early as the second millennium B.C.E. and, possibly, even earlier. Thus, we find the following description in a Babylonian cuneiform text, *"If you wish to make clear lapis lazuli, you must crush and mix together 10 minae of ammuraku mineral, 15 minae of ash of Salzkraut (sodium-containing ash of the salt-containing steppe plants), 1 2/3 minae of Weisskraut. Put the mass into a furnace/kiln, whose four ventilation holes are cold, and watch it carefully. A good smokeless fire must be lit and the mass heated until it is white hot. It must then be taken out, ground and poured into a good mould. Later, the mass must be put back into a cold furnace/kiln, reheated until it is white hot and then applied to the bricks as enamel"*.

Another way to make artificial lapis lazuli (or *Merku-Lazurstein*) is the following: *"A mina of powered sand, 1 1/3 minae of amarakku mineral and 5 1/2 shekels of mother-of-pearl must be dried, stirred and crushed on a mina of bright enamel and poured into a mould"*. **Merku-Lazurstein** is a precious mineral with the so far unexplained prefix of merku or marcasite. This is a type of iron sulphide, much used by later alchemists, or perhaps there was a lazurite mineral with pyrite-like gleams of gold, which was imitated in this way.

The texts from the middle of the second millennium B.C.E. distinguished between *uqnu šadê* (lapis lazuli from the Uqnu River and mountains), real lapis lazuli and *uqnu kûri* (lapis lazuli from the oven). Differentiation on a macroscopic level between lapis lazuli and artificial lapis lazuli is often difficult, because of the preservation states described above. In order to validate our macroscopically and microscopically made identifications and to come to a decision in some open cases, we measured the density of the beads in the 2007 campaign.

Of course, this method is applicable only to investigate the beads without any gold setting. The density of lapis lazuli is between 2.4 and 2.8 g/cm³, depending on the composition of the stone. We have to emphasise that the weathered surface can influence the real density; however, weathering has been recognised only on the surface. Therefore, the measured density of these objects must be close to the density of the unweathered raw material.

In order to determine the density, we utilised **hydrostatic weighing**: a method in which the sample is weighed in air and then weighed in a liquid of known density (in our case, it was distilled water). The volume of the sample is equal to the loss of weight in the liquid divided by the density of the liquid. Based on this non-destructive and in situ applicable method, it was possible to distinguish three groups. Archimedes had used this concept already in 250 B.C.E.



Gemstones at Qatna Royal Tomb

In the preliminary report first group, there are objects with a density of more than 2.4 g/cm³. These objects were identified as lapis lazuli. The second group involves objects with density less than 2.0 g/m³. These objects have been identified as artificial lapis lazuli or lapis lazuli imitations. Only few objects belonged to the third group with a density between 2.0 and 2.4 g/m³. In this case, further analyses are necessary to make a reliable decision concerning the raw material.

Until recently, it was commonly believed that the first lapis lazuli finds found at ancient sites in Mesopotamia, Iran and the Indus came from the famous Badakhshan mines (Afghanistan). However, there is evidence that, as early as ca. 2700 B.C.E., lapis lazuli from Lake Baikal was used and this source cannot be excluded simply because of its great distance from Mesopotamia. Moreover, there is evidence that ancient lapis lazuli (Shahr-I Sokhta) originates from the Pamir Mountains in Tadjikistan, the Chagai Hills in Pakistan and from Badakhshan in Afghanistan, thus demolishing the generally accepted hypothesis of only one supply source. Unfortunately, for a long time, it has not been possible to differentiate between the lapis lazuli from Afghanistan and other sources by any mineralogical and chemical examination.

Three scientific tests failed to distinguish Afghan from Baikal lapis lazuli. There are few scientific examinations, like mineralogical investigation, trace elements analyses by X-ray fluorescence, optical spectroscopy and atomic absorption spectroscopy available to use on lapis lazuli in order to determine its origin. By measuring the ratios of sulphur isotopes, it could be possible to distinguish between lapis lazuli from Afghanistan, Chile and Siberia.

There are also differences in the percentages of MgO and K₂O in lapis from Afghanistan, Russia, Italy, the Pamirs, Baikal, and Burma. It has been claimed that thin section analysis and sulphur isotope determination have allowed to infer the origin of the lapis lazuli products, but all these investigations are destructive.

As lapis lazuli is very rare and precious in the archaeological material, in most cases, it is not allowed to undertake destructive analytical investigations. In the last few years, Prompt Gamma Activation Analysis (PGAA), a non-destructive analytical technique has been utilised in order to determine the origin of lapis lazuli. PGAA is one of the few non-destructive methods, which is applicable in bulk elemental analysis of valuable archaeological objects, like beads and cylinder seals.

First successes in distinguishing raw lapis lazuli of different occurrences (Afghanistan, Lake Baikal, Ural, Canada, and Chile) have already been published. Because of the positive results, we investigated small broken pieces of lapis lazuli beads from Qaṭna in order to determine the origin of the raw material. The measurements were carried out at the Institute of Isotopes, Chemical Research Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest and at the Cold Neutrons PGAA facility at FRM II, Munich.

Based on the non-destructive investigation of the chemical composition of the investigated lapis lazuli samples of the Royal Tomb of Qaṭna, an Afghan provenance of lapis lazuli could be proven. The gemstones of the Royal Tomb of Qaṭna have been identified, based on macroscopic and microscopic description. The most frequently used raw material is lapis lazuli and also macrocrystalline quartz varieties, like rock crystal and amethyst and microcrystalline quartz varieties, like chalcedony, carnelian, agate, and jasper. Green beads and pendants have been identified as variscite. The distribution of the raw materials in the tomb and in the girdle are different and the preservation states of the objects strongly depend on the immediate surroundings where the objects were found, but it is also influenced by the differences in the raw materials.

The already-investigated raw lapis lazuli originated from Afghanistan. In order to refine our observations on the raw materials of the archaeological objects, further investigations have been carried out, such as in-situ measurements of the chemical composition by transportable X-ray fluorescence, X-ray diffraction and μ -Raman method. Further non-destructive PGAA will be carried out on the lapis lazuli in order to determine its origin.



Science: Time sickness

By Mark Sharpen

OK then - time sickness is a real term. It was identified by **Dr Larry Dossey** in his 1982 book, *Space, Time & Medicine*, to describe the health consequences arising from the belief that time is constantly slipping away and that one can never accomplish enough. It's like having so many jobs to do that the list seems endless – and that feeling is time sickness, characterised by fatigue, guilt, anxiety and constant movement. But what can be done to combat this state of mind?

Part of the problem is to work out how each person deals with stress or depression, caused by time sickness – a study from the Department of Psychiatry, University of Alberta in August 2022 (published in the journal, *Development of Stress, Burnout and Occupational Hygiene*) found that prolonged stress and burnout significantly increase anxiety and depression, with burnout rates reaching 74% in high-pressure environments. While focused on teachers, the study reflects a larger issue, namely the relentless pressure to keep up takes a toll on mental and physical health.

However, time isn't something to compete against, because it can be managed. In other words, we're not running out of time like a finite resource, but not taking a moment or two to sort out priorities. Achieving one priority after another (like a list) can reduce the quotient of each person's anxiety. In effect, time is a friend rather than an enemy. So, let's think about how we evaluate our time.

Time should not be measured by productivity, by how much is achieved each day. Focus on meaningful moments, not just completed tasks. At the end of each day, list one or two moments that brought you genuine joy or connection, perhaps a quiet coffee break, a conversation with a friend or even a few minutes of deep breathing.

There's no defined timeline for each day. Instead of having to strict deadlines for career moves or personal goals, it's easier to have flexible periods during which you'd like to achieve them. Write down one major goal and list several realistic, smaller steps to get there. Allow yourself room to adapt the plan if life takes an unexpected turn.

As mentioned above, time can be your friend. Instead of racing against time, work with it. If we set realistic expectations that allow for rest, we see that slowing down often leads to greater fulfilment. At the start of each week, set realistic expectations by drafting a schedule that blends work tasks with intentional me time. This balance can lead to more sustainable progress in both work and personal life.

Lose the distractions. Multi-tasking is not the answer to time sickness. Whether it's answering emails over breakfast, juggling multiple tasks at work or switching between conversations and chores at home, we often believe we're being productive—when, in reality, we're just fragmenting our attention.

Dr Sophie Leroy developed the idea of **attention residue** to describe how shifting between tasks leaves part of your focus stuck on the previous one. In her June 2018 paper, published in *Organization Science*, Leroy and her co-author found that when people anticipate returning to an unfinished task under time pressure, they experience attention residue, making it harder to focus on the interrupted task. However, the study also found that using a *ready-to-resume* plan (briefly reflecting on and planning the return to the unfinished task) can help mitigate these effects and improve overall performance.

- **Single-task with intention:** multi-tasking actually slows you down and reduces efficiency. Instead of doing multiple tasks, fully engage with one thing at a time. When working, close unnecessary tabs, silence notifications and give yourself a distraction-free block of time.
- **Use the ready-to-resume plan:** before switching tasks, take 30 seconds to jot down where you left off. This clears mental space, reduces attention residue and makes it easier to refocus when you return.
- **Set boundaries around distractions:** identify your biggest interruptions (phone notifications, emails or background noise) and create limits. Try designated screen-free hours or scheduling deep work sessions where you focus uninterrupted.
- **Give your brain transition time:** when shifting between tasks, pause for a moment to reset. Take a few deep breaths, stretch or briefly reflect before jumping into something new.

By managing your attention instead of constantly reacting to distractions, you reduce stress, but there is another aspect to time sickness – **how do we experience time?** It has been shown that our perception of time expands when we're fully engaged in the present instead of worrying about how little we have left.

In a paper (Kiken, L.G., Lundberg, K.B. & Fredrickson, B.L. *Being Present and Enjoying It: Dispositional Mindfulness and Savoring the Moment Are Distinct, Interactive Predictors of Positive Emotions and Psychological Health*) published in *Mindfulness*, researchers found that simply paying more attention to the present moment, (also known as **dispositional mindfulness**) and consciously savouring positive experiences can work together to boost day-to-day positive emotions and overall psychological health. Over a nine-week period, participants who reported higher mindfulness and savouring, enjoyed greater increases in positive emotions, fewer depressive symptoms and improved life satisfaction.

Slowing down isn't about ignoring responsibilities or ditching our goals. It's about cultivating what positive psychologists call **time affluence**, namely the sense that you have enough mental space and flexibility to savour your experiences rather than rush through them. Here are a few ways to increase our time affluence.

- **Practise single-moments of mindfulness, rather than an hour of meditation.** You don't always need an hour of meditation to reset. Pause for 60 seconds to focus on breathing, notice the surroundings or feel the warmth of a coffee mug in your hands.
- **Engage one's senses when eating a meal or walking outside:** what are the sights, sounds, textures and smells around? This sensory awareness anchors our minds in the here and now, reducing the urge to fast-forward through our experiences.
- **Think about tiny wins at the end of each day.** We can reflect on one small accomplishment or moment of joy, such as a heartfelt conversation or even a well-deserved break. Recognising these moments trains the mind to value what one has rather than what's missing.
- **Create intentional gaps** between tasks or meetings, perhaps just five minutes to stretch, sip water or step outside. These brief intervals help prevent that frantic, urgency around tasks and allow time to approach each new task more calmly and effectively.

By consciously slowing down and immersing ourselves in the present moment, we'll not only fight time sickness, but also discover that life feels richer when we're not racing against the clock. Time sickness can trick us into believing that we're stuck in a relentless cycle of constant hurry. That reminds me – time to finish my text and relax with a coffee.

Forests: Healing through nature in Kenya

By Andrew Mukaria

The contemporary known cry in most parts of **Meru and the entire Kenya nation** is how rivers and springs are drying. Everyone, including school-going kids, understands that the main factors contributing to this situation are limited rains and reduced water relate to the loss of biodiversity, forest cover, and loss of the catchment areas. I have realised that most Meru people know of the causes of ecological degradation, but the challenge is the preservation and meeting their need or greed. There is also a lifestyle change away from the traditional indigenous knowledge. This has contributed to a lack of viewing the forests as a sacred place of contemplation and healing. Additionally, forests are considered and understood in commercial terms, leading to further exploitation and escalating the suffering. This piece is a reflective narrative on how nature's sacred meaning in the traditional Ameru culture brought healing in the society.

The **Ameru life lesson**, how they interacted with nature, how they treated their living using nature and how nature served as the resting place for their dead, is an integral part of how nature brought healing. It offered physical, psychological and spiritual healing. Their approaches might help us to see how nature is part of our healing: a recognition of our interconnectedness. There is no scientific claim to support that their actions brought healing, but nature and spirituality generated hope and connected the dead with the living. Forested areas were part of their integral spirituality, a heaven for their ancestors, who were watching over them.

The Ameru is a Bantu group of people currently living on Mount Kenya's and Nyambene slopes in the present Meru County, Tharaka Nithi County and minorities in the surrounding counties (Isiolo, Embu, Laikipia Counties). The group comprises the subtribes, Igembe, Tigania, Imenti, Mwimbi, Miutini, Igoji, Muthambi, Chuka and Tharaka. Despite the sub-tribes, Meru exists as one tribe and a group of people sharing common cultural values, traditional religion, language (though with differing dialects) and practices. Presently, most of the Ameru are Christians, the majority being the Methodist; other major denominations are Presbyterian, Catholic and Pentecostal, with traces adhering to Islam and traditional beliefs and practices. Ameru's history of migration, spirituality and religious belief are all tied together.

This story has been passed orally and through artefacts for generations since there are no clear written texts. Ameru's religious beliefs and spirituality are very much a product of their migration and history, more so for the older generation. It has fascinating similarities with Jewish mythology, even though it was narrated much earlier than their encounter with Christianity or any religion with a Jewish background. This might give the narrative some authenticity, or doubt, or question whether the Ameru had any contact with Judeo-Christian religion before their encounter with the European-Christianity. According to scholars, the Meru people began in Mbwaa, a place that remains unknown. Most anthropologists suggest it to be in the Kenyan coast-Island of Manda, while others believe the Ameru migrated from North Africa (Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt). The two hypotheses define the perceived places of the Ameru origin.

The forests became an integral part of the Ameru during migration. Ngaawas the original name of the Ameru; the name, Ngaa, is from Ngaaruni, meaning wilderness. Also, the name, Meru or Miiru, originating from the Maasai, means the forested area. Thus, Ameru can technically be called **the people of wilderness or forest**. The name is an indicator of the Ameru people's appreciation and significant association with natural habitats, a holistic co-existence in the meaning of the name of Meru, its spiritual connection to nature and its power of

healing. The connection with the natural world denoted their experiences of migration and settlement, which defines every facet of their existence.

Nevertheless, the identity of the Ameru people is not only in the forest, but the values embedded in their culture. Though the forest was about living, in tune with nature, one another, and connection with ancestors, Nature is the conglomerate of all things: the people, forests, mountains, sun, rains, moon, and spiritual beings. In this case, the forest served as an identity with sacred meaning as an expression of the extra human actor. It gives meaning to the living and gave life to those perceived dead. Therefore, it defined life and positioned spirituality.

With the coming of the European missionaries, the first Ameru belief that was eradicated was the belief in nature spirits and how they held the sacredness of nature. Horne, the first colonial administrator in Meru, built his administration offices and a standard living place in a sacred place, contrary to the Ameru customs. His activities, such as clearing sacred forests and diverting rivers into trenches (with nature believed to be sacred) became the genesis of the exploitation of nature.

Today, only a few places such as hills, mountains, groves and forested areas are offered sacred meaning in worship and as shrines of the council of elders. For Ameru, a belief in the sacredness of nature was rooted in the sacred and divine presence in the natural world. Nature was considered a sacred place for prayers, reflections, contemplations, health and wholeness. Ameru spirituality was intrinsically eco-friendly. As was seen, the Ameru people had a close relationship with nature, built during their flight from Mbwaa, where natural spaces (forests, animals and rocks) became places they found companionship, security and sustenance. This cemented their relationships, a circle of life between the living, non-living and the dead (ancestors) and nature (plants, animals and non-animates).

Nature provided **herbs and medicine** for their healing. Further, nature became a designated sacred space, considered to be both ancestral and God's resting place. Through a form of social construction, the forests gained divinity. This is because, throughout the exodus, Ameru laid their departed ones to rest. It is technically to say, the Ameru heaven. In accordance with Ameru spirituality, ancestral resting places are sacred. Hence, nature found its meaning. Some nature spaces became imbued with unquestionable authority or prestige and are preserved for special or sacred use. They are holy, as places where the divine or supernatural power breaks through to the human world. Today, there remain some places that were considered sacred spaces by the Ameru people, such as, Kirimara (Mount Kenya) Njambene (Nyambene hills and forest), Ng'aya forest, Nkunga lake, etc. Some sacred trees, plants, and animals also have unique preferences concerning divinity, divination, peace-making and healing.

The Ameru **overcame grief through nature** - not only by being in nature, but being part of nature. As mentioned, the forest was an integral part of the Ameru spirituality. In most African societies, the concept of death is intricately tied to life. In African communities (pre-Christian), death is just a rite of passage to another existence, the old world. It is a transition that does not alter or end the life or change the person's temperament, but only causes a change in its form. It is held that individuals who have died continued to live in their ancestors' land, and they continued to commune with their families. The goal of death in most African communities, including Ameru, was one to become an ancestor. Those who died had an accurate burial, bounded by significant religious formalities and cultural understanding of the people was a clear transition to becoming an ancestor.

African life had two forms: **Sasa (present) and Zamani (past)**. In most African communities, experiences progressed from present to the past and past to the present in a rebirth's circulation motion. The Ameru attitudes of death differed, depending on the person's lifestyle, social status and the cause of the end. Not every

death was equal. Some deaths were more revered, which determined the grieving and ceremonies. Death of a good or accomplished person and at an old age, as per the customs, was perceived to be sleeping and dwelling well with the ancestors. This was contrasted with the death of wicked, evil individuals, those who died prematurely or in mysterious circumstances. To the evil or corrupt person, the Ameru said, the person will keep on wandering, without entering a world of ancestors, but as a tormenting spirit. Those who died in mysterious death or prematurely had to be cleansed so that they may rest well and not come back to haunt the living ones.

For an accomplished individual, despite mourning and a sense of loss, the event was not seen as a breach of daily life. Though there was an inconspicuous and sad period of mourning and rituals, the death of a virtuous person marked the prosperous end of one life cycle and was within the typical sequence of events. The death of a wicked or unfinished person was a disastrous and dangerous event. *Unfinished* refers to those individuals who had died prematurely, having not yet attained the status of elderhood and those seniors who died too early to observe the ceremonial transfer of power to the next generation; thus, these situations required certain rituals.

The importance of the rituals and why they mattered most was that an individual is not severed permanently from the living. The Ameru never conducted burial the modern way. The body of a person could never be buried in the ground or cremated. During their migration, they cemented a good relationship with nature. Forest became the dwelling place of both the living and the dead. In case of near-death, individuals were taken into the forest and put in the **hut of death**. It was a house built in the woods only for those nearing death. Once they die, the wild animals will consume them or the dead rot in the forest. It may sound archaic, but the forest connected the living humans and the dead. Therefore, the forest received a mark of the ancestors' dwelling place and the living space for those alive. It also offered the meaning of sacred space of contemplation and regeneration.

The traditional healers, other sacred office bearers, and those in need visited the forest and other sacred spaces to communicate with the living dead. The experiences and the connection brought psycho-spiritual therapy and healing. Further, it was said when we heal nature, we heal ourselves. This argument is that there are other invaluable health benefits when we take care of the natural environment, both spiritual and secular. Prior to the westernization of most African communities, there was no dichotomy between what might be termed sacred or secular as life was holistic.

There was a clear connection between what is physical and what is divine (sacred). It is visible: the destruction of the forest is now extended to us. We are wounded, much as we have wounded the environment. The water has reduced and the little left is polluted, the air is full of fumes, the food has become less and contaminated and there are plastics everywhere. This does not only hurt the environment, but it hurts us and has affected our health and our lifespan. To human beings, it has created physical, psychological and spiritual sickness. By healing nature, therefore, we will heal ourselves.

That is how the Ameru found healing in nature: the interconnected and wellbeing. The approaches taken did not only help the Ameru overcome their grief, but in general, they met their needs. On matters of death, it was viewed as a moment of self-detachment with reality but still exist within nature. Death was merely a transition and not departure and following the will of God. The forest offered life a meaning, a home, a providence, security, a point of connection with ancestors, and a sacred space of contemplation. This generated the intrinsic worth of nature, a sacred meaning, and value apart from a human being. It was all possible through the magical healing power of the forest.

A Spring mystery: SS Waratah

By the Storyteller

The Waratah was, and still is, one of the most baffling mysteries of the sea. In July of 1909, the 500-foot steamer, on her return maiden voyage from Australia to Capetown, went missing with over 200 passengers and crew somewhere in the Indian ocean off the rugged eastern coast of South Africa. *SS Waratah* was brand new, having been constructed in 1908. She had been designed for Blue Anchor Line's shipping company and was meant to operate between Europe and Australia. The ship was launched on 12 September 1908 by the wife of the Agent-General of Victoria. The ship disappeared on only her second voyage. She left Durban in South Africa at about 8.15pm on 26 July, 1909, with the crew and 211 passengers on board. On 27 July, at around 4am, the ship was spotted by another ship named *Clan MacIntyre*.

As *SS Waratah* was a faster ship: she was able to catch up and drew level with the *Clan MacIntyre* by 6am. Both the vessels communicated with each other using signal lamps and exchanged information relating to the name and destinations of the ships. Eventually, the *Waratah* pulled away from the *Clan MacIntyre*, gradually speeded up and vanished over the horizon by 9.30am. This was the final sighting of the ship, who was unknowingly sailing into a hurricane. Over the next 24 hours, the weather deteriorated rapidly and the seas became extremely rough. According to the captain of the *Clan MacIntyre*, it was the worst-ever weather conditions he had witnessed at sea in his career as a seaman in 13 years.

So, what happened to *SS Waratah*? There were a number of unconfirmed sightings of after its disappearance. On 27 July, a ship named *Harlow* saw smoke coming out of a steamer. The amount of visible smoke made the captain of *Harlow* think that the ship was on fire and, certainly, a new ship such as the *Waratah* should not be producing excess smoke unless something was seriously wrong. When darkness fell, the *Harlow* crew saw the running lights of the steamer approaching. Then, as they watched, they suddenly saw two bright flashes coming from the direction of the steamer and the lights disappeared. The captain thought it was due to explosions.

On the same evening, at about 9.30pm, the Union-Castle Liner *Guelph*, which was heading north of Durban, passed a ship and exchanged lamp signals. Due to poor visibility and bad weather, she was only able to see the last three letters of the ship T-A-H. The final possible sighting comes from a mounted rifleman named Edward Joe Conquer who was watching the seas through a telescope on 27 July. In his diary, he had mentioned a ship whose description matched that of *SS Waratah*. He had witnessed the ship struggle with the heavy seas and then suddenly disappear as the wave rolled over her.

SS Waratah was scheduled to reach Cape Town on the 29 July 1909. However, she never arrived. Fear started growing as other ships that left Durban after *SS Waratah* started arriving, and they reported not seeing *SS Waratah*. On 1 August 1909, the first search was launched by the tugboat *T.E Fuller*. Encountering dreadful weather, she was forced to abandon her efforts and return to port. Cruisers were deployed by the Royal Navy to search for *SS Waratah*., but due to large waves, they also had to return to the port. By this time it was becoming apparent that the worst had happened.

On 13 August 1909, the steamship *Insizwa* reported sighting several bodies at the Mbhase River's mouth, where *Waratah* was last seen. The captain of *SS Tottenham*, also saw bodies in the water two weeks after the disappearance of *Waratah*. The *Waratah* had simply disappeared. Until the wreck is found, we can only guess as to the fate of *SS Waratah*.

Spring wildlife

Collated by Kerry Williams, Sussex Wildlife Trust

It's February/ March, and we're on the cusp of an amphibian awakening. After a winter in hibernation, frogs, toads and newts will start to emerge. If you have a pond, you may have already noticed spawn starting to appear.

Great Crested Newts © Dave Kilbey



Marsh Frog © Roger Wilmshurst



Natterjack Toad © Derek Middleton



Common Toad © Dave Kilbey



Smooth Newt © Dave Kilbey



Common Frog © Dave Kilbey



Environment: World Seagrass Day

By WWF UK

The ocean has great potential in helping us mitigate the effects of climate change and reverse the loss of nature. But it can only do that if it's in a healthy state and its resources are being used sustainably. Seagrass absorbs and stores carbon and provides a vital home for nature. Healthy meadows can also help protect communities from the impacts of coastal erosion and flooding. However, we have lost up to 92% of UK seagrass meadows. **WWF Cymru is working with Project Seagrass** to restore seagrass meadows in north Wales and demand large-scale restoration across Wales.

The ocean supplies nearly half the oxygen we breathe, absorbs over a quarter of the carbon dioxide we produce, regulates the climate and contributes to food security. Welsh seas cover 43% of Wales and are home to an abundance of marine life, including globally significant colonies of seabirds and important habitats such as seagrass and seaweed. They support industries, livelihoods, cultures and communities. Yet, the health of our seas is in decline and they are at threat from pollution, unsustainable human activity and climate change.



© Lewis Jefferies / WWF-UK

As part of this UK wide project, WWF Cymru are working with local partners and communities to restore seagrass meadows. In 2020, we successfully planted two hectares of seagrass meadows at a pilot site in Dale, which sits within the Milford Haven waterway. In 2022, we launched a project to restore ten hectares of seagrass meadow on the north Wales coast, in the areas of Anglesey and the Llyn Peninsula. We aim to plant over 5 million seagrass seeds by the end of 2026. This Winter/Spring planting begins on the Llyn Peninsula.

By better managing our seas in Wales, we can make sure they continue to provide us with essential benefits and exciting opportunities for innovation and sustainable livelihoods. Healthy and resilient Welsh seas can provide a range of benefits including:

- food security
- sustainable livelihoods
- protection from coastal erosion
- potential for emerging industries that can help us on our journey to net zero. An example is **regenerative ocean farming** – growing seaweed and shellfish side by side in the wild. Seaweed as a food is full of nutrients and, excitingly, it has the potential to be used as an alternative to animal feed to reduce methane gases, as a bio-plastic to replace plastic packaging and more.

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